

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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State Board Releases Statement on Use and Misuse of Standardized Tests Calls for Changes to Federal No Child Left Behind Act

BARRE - The State Board of Education unanimously approved a statement concerning the proper and improper uses of standardized testing after a four-month review and study, the Board announced today.

"While there are many sound uses for standardized tests, the federal requirements have resulted in over-testing and a narrowing of our educational focus," said State Board of Education Chair Stephan Morse. "This needs to be fixed."

Education Secretary Rebecca Holcombe and member of the Board added, "We must look more broadly at the purposes of education. These purposes also include global citizenship, good health practices, artistic expression and the transferable skills we need for the twenty-first century."

The [five page statement and resolution](#) notes that states are spending too much time on testing, and states do not receive enough new information to make it worth the added expense and loss of teaching time. The Board urges the federal government to reduce the number of grades in which testing is required. "The overreliance on high-stakes standardized testing in state and federal accountability systems is undermining educational quality and equity in the nation's public schools," the resolution states.

It is commonly agreed by observers from many perspectives that the No Child Left Behind law is unrealistic, insufficiently funded and not achieving its purposes. Nevertheless, the law remains in effect until Congress reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of Education began issuing waivers to states, excusing them from meeting the requirement of all students in all schools passing the tests by 2014. However, to be issued such a waiver, teachers and principals have to be evaluated on gains in test scores. The Vermont State Board resolution finds that such use of standardized tests for evaluating teachers and schools is not scientifically defensible. To use an unreliable set of scores to make personnel or evaluative decisions is too inaccurate and thus raises ethical issues.

This combination of excessive testing coupled with unwarranted high-stakes consequences, "has caused considerable collateral damage, such as narrowing the curriculum, teaching to the test, reducing love of learning, pushing students out of school, and undermining school climate."

In their resolution, the Board calls on the Secretary to "reexamine public school accountability based on multiple and qualitative criteria." The Secretary reported to the Board that the development of this process is well under way based on the newly adopted and comprehensive [Education Quality Standards](#) adopted by the Board last year.

The Board also called on Congress and the federal administration to amend the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* to reduce testing, and open new avenues for collecting more comprehensive and valid data on the performance of our children and our schools. As the various states differ considerably in the nature and structure of their education programs, the State Board also urged greater flexibility than the one-size-fits-all approach that characterizes No Child Left Behind.

“This was a thorough and diligent process which unfolded over several months,” said State Board Member William Mathis, who coordinated the State Board resolution effort. “The State Board reviewed research findings on assessment and accountability, held numerous discussions over several monthly meetings, included the input of all Board members, worked through several drafts, and arrived at a strong statement that was unanimously adopted. We urge other state boards of education and national associations to join this discussion on our goals for education and the re-design of accountability systems to better match our purposes.”

Find the statement and resolution at: http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-SBE_AssmntAcct_Adpted081914.pdf

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